

Minutes of the Ninth Annual General Meeting of THE WIGGONHOLT ASSOCIATION

A Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered Charity Number 1129002

at Rackham Village Hall on Tuesday 22nd May 2018 at 7.15pm

The meeting was chaired by David Burnet, Director and Treasurer of
The Wiggonholt Association

1. Apologies for absence: Hugh Gilbert, Elizabeth Zeschin, Tony Whitbread.
2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising: The Minutes of the Eighth AGM were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.
3. Directors' Report: (given by the Chairman)

During 2017 and early 2018 The Wiggonholt Association focused on its response to the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan and to the Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Joint Area Action Plan. There would be a later briefing, and acknowledged the tremendous help and assistance given by Richard Bate of Green Balance.

We had reviewed contentious local planning matters and had kept tabs on the Pulborough and Storrington Neighbourhood Plans. This involved taking part in the second consultation on the latter, and also the various stages of consultation on the South Downs Local Plan. The SDLP contained policies relevant to a National Park, such as dark skies and tranquillity, but also involved housing and infrastructure within the Park. When the Local Plan was finally adopted, it would be used as one of two major policy document guiding planning decisions within the Park, whereas it was currently only a "consideration", although an important one. Martin Vasey would be saying a few words on the South Downs Local Plan and the Storrington Neighbourhood Plan as well as the South Downs Network.

The Wiggonholt Roman Bathhouse mast: this was on the road between the Wickford Bridge (Pulborough) and the West Sussex Golf Club, opposite Link Farm. Beneath it is the Roman Bathhouse, a scheduled ancient monument. It was put there in error 20 years ago when it was agreed by Horsham DC that the mast would not be replaced when its use had expired. Two years ago a second, much taller, mast was installed alongside it, with two attendant green metal housing boxes. In the last few weeks the old mast had disappeared, leaving the

new mast and all four housing boxes. WSCC informed Historic England about the second mast at the time of installation and we were now in touch with WSCC archaeology department.

The North Stoke telephone kiosk continued its function as an information point, an interesting role in an interesting place and well worth a visit. The kiosk was acquired four years ago and it was repainted last year. Our own information leaflet had been updated, and it was kept supplied with local and National Park literature. Volunteer help was sought on a quarterly basis to help for an hour to two to clean the kiosk because keeping it spic and span was vital to its attraction and usefulness.

A preferred route for the A27 Arundel by-pass had very recently been announced, a modified version of Option 5A, being a new dual carriageway sweeping round the river valley south of Arundel between the Cross Bush Junction and Ford Road, affecting the heritage area of Tortington and passing through the southern tip of the National Park and Binstead Woods before rejoining the present A27 at Yapton. There would be a continued pedestrian and cycle path alongside the existing A27. Ian Hare would later say a few words about the present and future policy for Gatwick Airport noise and flight-path control.

Last summer members cruised down the Wey & Arun Canal on our annual lunchtime excursion with a riverside picnic. We were taking soundings about interest in a trip this summer.

The new General Data Protection Regulation came into force on 25th May leaving a major hiatus for many small charities who have not approached their members and contacts. This is about renewing consent to hold personal data. The WA circulated a comprehensive paper about this new regulatory change in very good time, with excellent results. Members can still opt out by unsubscribing via email or post.

In conclusion, the WA was always looking for people with a bit of energy and knowledge to spare to deal with our various projects. Calls would be welcome to David Burnet or Janet Aidin.

4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts: David Burnet presented the accounts for 2017 by reference to the income and expenditure summary. Copies of the full accounts in form required for Company and Charitable compliance were also available to Members. It was noted that the accounts no longer needed to be examined. After answering questions and taking comments on the

Accounts David proposed them for adoption by the Meeting, seconded by Phil Slade. They were unanimously adopted.

5. Retirement of Directors by rotation: Michael Aidin was gravely ill and had resigned. This left the following Directors who were due to resign at this Meeting: Janet Aidin, David Burnet, Elizabeth Zeschin and Martin Vasey. (Elizabeth had expressed a wish to resign permanently when the Minerals Local Plan was adopted later in the year.

6. Appointment of Directors:

The above had all agreed to stand and were duly proposed and seconded (Janet Aidin by Kate Glazier and Anne Jenkinson); David Burnet by Erica Riddle and John Glazier; Elizabeth Zeschin by Janet Aidin and David Burnet, and Martin Vasey by Viviane Doussy and Ian Hare. It was unanimously resolved by the Meeting to re-elect them.

7. West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan: (Report by Janet Aidin)

In September last year the Examination-in-public took place under the chairmanship of Jonathan Manning the Government Inspector. We were represented by Richard Bate the environmental planner who gave advice about the Minerals Local Plan in 1998 and is also a veteran geologist.

The examination is to persuade the Inspector that the Plan is sound. The onus of this rests on the minerals authority, in this case West Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority. The County Council takes the lead because of its greater experience.

The Council had hoped to produce a Plan, which would not allow soft sand to be extracted in the National Park except in 'exceptional circumstances' (where there is overriding need or public interest). It tried to allocate a site just outside the boundary at Ham Farm near Steyning. There is an allocation for soft sand and West Sussex has a shortfall (2.3mt over the plan period – 2033).

The WA was very concerned that the Council would overlook future capacity for importing soft sand from the sea bed. The safeguarded wharves on the South Coast would be given away for development. The WA had a lot to say about other sources of soft sand, and particularly about the wharves.

Silica sand has come into the picture since the last Minerals Plan and I don't propose to say much about it at this stage except to say that there is pressure from the industry to show a national shortfall. There was a tendency to misunderstand silica policy and the WA sought to rectify this – only in the interest of making extraction in the National Park more stringent. These amendments were agreed by the Council before the Examination opened, so they are unlikely to be changed.

The Examination went on for seven days over two weeks. Ham Farm produced quite a lot of public attendance, but otherwise it was the developers, the national environmental bodies – and the Wiggonholt Association. There was no representation from those opposed to the vast silica field of Horncroft near Bury. The developer succeeded in having the whole of this huge area safeguarded (meaning that a stop is put on other development).

The Big Beasts of minerals geology were also there, on opposing sides of the argument. It is always interesting to hear arguments, which are highly informed. It sometimes gets quite close to the bone and they all know one another. Otherwise the County Council was the main contender, defending its plan, but in the case of Ham Farm some major legal representation. Our wharves and safeguarding session proved quite exciting with Richard being the major contributor.

The next stage in February was that the Council produced Proposed Modifications based on its experience at the Examination.

The first was the removal of Ham Farm Steyning as an extraction site, satisfactory in many ways and approved by the WA. But the effect is that the Council now has to re-evaluate the whole of its soft sand policy. The rest of the Plan will go forward to adoption without a policy on soft sand, which must be produced as a Review within the following six months. We are not sure the Council quite understands the effect of this. Firstly they seem to have lost sight of the “exceptional circumstances” criterion for extraction in the National park. Secondly it gives a window of opportunity for anyone with a soft sand site to jump in and apply for planning permission without there being a policy in place. We have objected most strongly. (We also supported the exclusion of Horncroft which so far not been brought into the Plan despite strong representation.)

The Council has also stated that there is no substitute for land-won soft sand, and there is in the form of marine dredged soft sand. Again we have objected.

Next the Council has tried to use weasel words about “appropriate” safeguarding of the marine wharves. This equates to “not properly safeguarded” and we have objected strongly.

The Inspector will have regard to the proposed modifications but we don't know whether he will find them acceptable or how he will decide on the rest of the Plan. He is due to report sometime this summer.

Our own impression at the WA is that the issues are becoming more and more complex to the point where the Council itself is misinterpreting policy and making mistakes of perception, some of which we (through Richard) have been able to adjust. But it is very worrying when the guardians of the public interest, and the protection of the environment, are enabled to produce policy without firm understanding of some of the issues involved. It even had to be explained to the inspector that you could leave a wharf empty as a practical proposition by creating a short-term lease over it for other forms of storage so that when it was needed for aggregate landings it could be taken in hand again. He clearly identified safeguarding with minerals deposits under the earth.

8. South Downs Local Plans; South Downs Network:

Martin Vasey spoke about the South Downs Local Plan, the Storrington Neighbourhood Plan and the South Downs Network. The WA had commented on the Local Plan two years ago following a long gestation period. The Plan had now been presented to a Government Inspector to determine its soundness through the Examination system. The latest version of the Plan had 2- or 3-page summaries on housing numbers, social housing, and biodiversity, which provided a useful overview of targets. For example the Objectively Assessed Housing Need criteria determined 450 new housing units each year within the Park. The national planning policy of Duty to Cooperate (with adjoining administrative areas) meant that there would be some trickledown from (say) S. London, while the centres of population most likely to absorb this figure were Lewes, Fernhurst and Petersfield. The real problem was the kind of housing required, where most properties in the Park were valued at more than £400,000. This usually meant workers having to live outside the Park and commute in. Only 114 dwellings out of the target constituted affordable housing, and developers could still offer financial compensation for non-inclusion in their planning applications.

There were 52 Neighbourhood Plans inside the National Park, most of which had been submitted to the inspectorate. Henfield's had established the principle – via judicial review – that parish councils were required to say not only where they would accept development, but also where they didn't want development and why. Storrington's Plan had been submitted 18 months ago, but was returned by the Inspector for similar reasons. Martin noted that populations had the final say by referendum.

Ian Hare (a Pulborough Parish councillor) added that Pulborough had benefited from the example of the pitfalls, which had befallen the Storrington Neighbourhood Plan.

Ian Hare was then invited to speak about the enlargement of PAGNE (the former Pulborough Against Gatwick Noise Emissions group) into the People Against Gatwick Noise Emissions Group, a communication body for Parish Councils, which was now negotiating with Gatwick as an equal partner. There was agreement on the dispersal of aircraft, and keeping planes at a higher altitude before final descent. On the other hand there was concern about the continuing growth of airport use and night flight trials of airplanes testing Satnav.

9. Future events:

- As already noted, a boat trip on the Wey & Arun Canal would be arranged if there was sufficient interest. Janet Aidin would deal with requests for places (01798 872531 or janet@aidin.co.uk)
- It was hoped to arrange a talk in memory of our Chairman Peter Flatter this year.

9. Any other business:

(1) Michael Pirkis proposed a vote of thanks to the Directors.

(2) Frank Riddle expressed concern about vehicle emissions resulting from modification of engine and other specifications, resulting in a dialogue with Ian Hare who pointed out that new regulations under the EU Directive were being introduced in the autumn

There being no further business the meeting was concluded.